

VZCZCXRO0289

PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #1217/01 0660821

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 070821Z MAR 06

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9449

INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY

RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI

RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//

RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA//J5/J021//

RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA

RUAYJAA/COMPATWING ONE KAMI SEYA JA

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 7619

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 4989

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8104

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 5025

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6177

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0985

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7178

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 9172

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TOKYO 001217

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST
DIVISION; TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS
OFFICE; SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
ADVISOR; CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 03/07/06

INDEX:

(1) Interview with Minshuto Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kozo Watanabe: Maehara's policy imprint not necessary; "I would not shrink from boycotting deliberations"

(2) Minshuto may conduct presidential election before September; Unifying views for diplomatic vision difficult; Moves afoot to tighten noose around Maehara

(3) LDP leadership race: LDP unable to push pet views for fear of public backlash; Work of regrouping stalled

(4) Tokyo air raid victims, kin to sue government possibly in August to seek apology, financial compensation

(5) Strains in the Japan-US alliance (Part 2): US expects Japan to act voluntarily

(6) Whale meat stockpiles become twice as much as level of 10 years ago because of surplus supplies as a result of expanded research whaling; No longer a rare delicacy

ARTICLES:

(1) Interview with Minshuto Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kozo Watanabe: Maehara's policy imprint not necessary; "I would not shrink from boycotting deliberations"

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)

March 7, 2006

Following its crashing defeat in the House of Representatives election last year, the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) has again been seriously hurt over the fake e-mail fiasco. The e-mail uproar also has generated questions about the party executive's capability to deal with crises. The Tokyo Shimbun yesterday asked former Lower House speaker Kozo Watanabe, who has just assumed the post of Diet Affairs Committee chairman, for his views about how to reconstruct his party's structure.

-- I guess there must be many things you need to reconsider over executive responses to the e-mail problem.

"Hearing the second question (by Hisayasu Nagata at a meeting of the House of Representatives' Budget Committee), (I thought) 'it is a strange question.' I should have told (former Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshihiko) Noda to advise Nagata to stop such questioning. I now regret it."

-- It took much time to bring the situation under control, didn't it?

'We fell into a state of confusion. It is necessary for veterans to deal with matters when we face setbacks. That was difficult for junior members to do so."

-- How do you assess the management of the party under the lead of Mr. Seiji Maehara since last September?

"Mr. Maehara is excellent in insight. But he has no craftiness as a politician at all. He does not act based on calculation, for instance, based on the judgment it would not be desirable to say

TOKYO 00001217 002 OF 009

something on this occasion or that."

-- How about a strategy of countermeasures?

"When I was a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, I told opposition members to 'submit a counterproposal if you oppose our plan.' This should be said by the ruling parties and not by opposition parties. When I was serving as LDP Diet Affairs Committee chairman, I feared a boycott of deliberations most. If the Diet Affairs Committee chairman of an opposition party says, "We will never boycott a session," the chairman will find it difficult to freely act, like a wrestler bound hand and foot. I am determined to thoroughly oppose bills that will not benefit the people. I will not shrink even from boycotting deliberations."

-- Mr. Maehara has said the party would unify views in June on the party's basic policies, including security. What do you think about this plan?

"In order to assume political power, it is necessary for the party to prepare unified security and diplomatic principles, but there is no need to adhere to the Maehara vision. It is unnecessary to have a Maehara imprint on policy."

-- Do you mean you are not particular about the June deadline?

"Unfortunately, it is impossible to assume political power before the House of Councillors election next year. Preparations must be made before the election."

-- You referred to this, but what will you do about the plan of moving up the party presidential race set for September?

"The election is scheduled for September (in principle). I will listen to opinions from many party members."

-- Wasn't there the option of replacing the executive?

"In such a case, we would not be able to attend Diet deliberations, which are managed with tax money, due to a party head election. We must fulfill our responsibility to the public

under the current system during the current Diet session."

(2) Minshuto may conduct presidential election before September; Unifying views for diplomatic vision difficult; Moves afoot to tighten noose around Maehara

ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged)
March 7, 2006

The major opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) must stop its penchant for wandering off course. Despite his weakened grip on the party in the wake of his party's total surrender to the Liberal Democratic Party over the e-mail flap, Seiji Maehara intends to serve out his term as party president until September. But his future seems gloomy since some Minshuto lawmakers are ready to place tight restrictions on his leadership role. Calls for an early party presidential election may grow stronger toward the end of the current Diet session in June.

Following Minshuto's total surrender to the LDP, Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama temporarily pressed President Maehara to

TOKYO 00001217 003 OF 009

resign from the post, alluding to the loss of influence in the party. It has therefore now become difficult to for Maehara to pursue his own policy style.

It has become difficult in practical terms now for Minshuto to produce a foreign and security policy "vision" by the end of the current Diet session, as planned.

Maehara delivered a speech at a breakfast meeting in Yokohama yesterday, hosted by Keiichiro Asao, who as foreign minister in the party's "Next Cabinet," has been playing a central role in the party's effort to produce a policy vision. In his speech, Maehara touched on bureaucratic sectionalism but stopped short of mentioning the vision per se.

The party's foreign and defense affairs departments are scheduled today to discuss the party's position on policy toward China for the vision. Many Minshuto members disagree with Maehara's China-as-threat argument. Such controversial themes as the right of collective self-defense and international contributions may cause Maehara to lose his grip on the party even further.

The website of Hideo Hiraoka, a Lower House member critical of Maehara, carried this message on March 4: "I don't think we can discuss matters calmly at a time like this when the party is in a critical situation, losing public support."

Veteran lawmakers have begun keeping their distance from Maehara.

Naoto Kan explained on his website on March 4 the reason why he refused to become the party's new Diet affairs chief: "I have questions on Mr. Maehara's approach to unify views on foreign and security affairs based on his view of China as posing a threat. I also disagree with him on a retirement system for party candidates running in elections."

Ichiro Ozawa is scheduled to launch a lawmaker's roundtable today to discuss educational issues in collaboration with former Education Minister Takeo Nishioka and others. Reportedly Kan, Hatoyama, Lower House Vice Speaker Takahiro Yokomichi, and others will join the forum. About 120 lawmakers have agreed to it. A junior lawmaker said: "Education is a theme easy to bring people together. But the group could act to encircle Maehara."

In compliance with advice by Kozo Watanabe, the new Diet affairs chief, Maehara has given key posts to experienced lawmakers, appointing former Secretary General Tatsuo Kawabata and former General Coordination Department Senior Director General Hirofumi Hirano as deputy Diet affairs chiefs, and former Policy Research Committee Chairman Yoshito Sengoku as deputy secretary general to serve as a coordinator for mid-level and junior members. A mid-level member noted, "I think they assumed posts because the party is in trouble and not necessarily to help Maehara."

A veteran member predicted: "Mr. Ozawa, the tactician, will not lie still until September. The party will not be able to produce its vision. There still is a possibility that the party will hold an early presidential election."

(3) LDP leadership race: LDP unable to push pet views for fear of public backlash; Work of regrouping stalled

ASAHI (Page 4) (Slightly abridged)

TOKYO 00001217 004 OF 009

March 3, 2006

About ten mid-level lawmakers from the Niwa-Koga, Tanigaki, and Kono factions in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) assembled together at a Chinese restaurant in Tokyo. Due in part to the strong liquor, the participants said: "Let's get together again;" and "Let's make much of the fact that we used to belong to the same group (Kochi-kai)." Another group of mid-level likeminded members from the three factions also agreed on Feb. 20 to create a study session on Asia diplomacy.

Kochi-kai, a faction founded decades ago by then Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda, was known as the liberal force that attached importance to Japan recovering its economy, while only being lightly armed. The group has split twice since former Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, 86, headed it. It has now split into the Niwa-Koga faction with 48 members, the Tanigaki faction with 15, and the Kono faction with 11. Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, 60, a possible future LDP president, heads the Tanigaki faction. Foreign Minister Taro Aso, 65, who is regarded as another candidate to succeed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, belongs to the Kono faction.

The dominant view is that chances are slim that the three factions will ever reunite. Whether the recent meetings to pave the way for reuniting the Kochi-kai will develop into a coalition depends on what kind of policies the three factions come up with, as well as whether they can set forth a "large signboard."

Members of the Niwa-Koga faction, which holds the key to the regrouping of the three factions, have kept separate distances from the Koizumi government. The faction reached a consensus in its general meeting on Feb. 23 on the co-chairmanship of Yuya Niwa, 61, and Makoto Koga, 65, in an attempt to avoid the faction from splitting. The move means that the faction failed to determine its policy line.

Koga said in a speech delivered on Feb. 12 in the city of Kurume, Fukuoka Prefecture, "If the political methods of (Prime Minister Koizumi) continue, the possibility grows that Japan will go down in ruins."

Several days after that day, Niwa told Koga, "I understand that some policies of the prime minister are excessive, but it is not that all the Koizumi polices are wrong."

Koga said in late January to some junior lawmakers in his faction: "When a number of LDP members support a certain candidate, I don't want you to rebel against that candidate."

Koizumi has destroyed the faction's function of recommending candidates for cabinet and LDP executive posts, based on his promise, "I will destroy the LDP." No Niwa-Koga faction members were appointed as a cabinet minister and LDP executive member. Faction members are concerned that they would be treated unkindly regarding personnel appointments unless the faction followed the Koizumi policy line. Such concern has made the three factions think of reuniting.

Aso is negative about a coalition of the three factions. He said, "If a presidential candidate has a strong flavor of being from a faction, it will be difficult for the candidate to score with party members belonging to no faction."

The Tanigaki faction, meanwhile, describes a strategy of having Tanigaki contend against Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, the most likely successor to Koizumi. He could do so by gaining support from the Niwa-Koga faction, according to a senior faction member.

Tanigaki will set forth a policy of emphasizing Asia diplomacy, focusing on repairing the strained Japan-China relationship. Regarding the domestic policy front, he will give consideration to fiscal reconstruction and to the socially weak, based on the widening income gap. In order to listen to various public opinions, he intends to make known his differences with Koizumi, who tends to ask voters to choose between only two things.

According to the outcome of a nationwide public opinion poll the Asahi Shimbun conducted in mid-February, 28% of the respondents said that Koizumi's successor should continue his policy of forging a "small government;" 47% responded that the policy line was good but the way of implementing policy should be reviewed; and only 14% answered that the policy line itself should be changed.

The Tsushima faction, a successor to the faction headed by former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita and the faction founded by former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, has been treated as the "force of resistance." The faction plans to incorporate a stance of placing importance on Asia and local development in its policy line. A senior faction member was conciliatory when he said: "Since the faction might split if it opposes the Koizumi policy line, we will basically follow it. Factions no longer can decide the LDP presidency; it is public opinion that does."

Public opinion that produced Prime Minister Koizumi five years ago is making the three factions shrink back from calling for a review of the Koizumi policy drive. A faction chief said, "Factions now have to sail in high seas without a compass."

(4) Tokyo air raid victims, kin to sue government possibly in August to seek apology, financial compensation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
March 5, 2006

A group of victims and relatives of those who died in air raids on Tokyo, including the March 10, 1945, Great Tokyo Air Raids, decided at a gathering in Tokyo's Taito Ward March 4 to file a lawsuit against the Japanese government in August, the month marking the anniversary of the end of World War II, seeking an apology and financial compensation.

The group based in Sumida Ward had intended to take the action last August but postponed the plan. The nation's first class action lawsuit against the government by air raid victims and kin has now been set in motion.

According to the group, 113 people have expressed their wish to join the suit and about 40 people have submitted statements to the group's secretariat. The group is making arrangements with lawyers representing plaintiffs. The group intends to build a support system in collaboration with other air raid-connected organizations.

TOKYO 00001217 006 OF 009

In the lawsuit, the group plans to attack the nation's legal system designed to provide postwar compensation, such as pensions, to military personnel and civilian employees of the armed forces but not to common civilians, saying that they were not government employees. The group is also determined to pursue the responsibility of the government, which has refused to pay financial compensation, saying that the public must equally tolerate the damages caused during the war.

Some 90 people, including the group's members, attended the gathering in which the group's vice chairman Kenji Ando declared: "The government's approach of not providing any compensation to us is intolerable. We are determined to join efforts with lawyers, academics, and other organizations." Pointing out the fact that the government has paid 1 trillion yen in pension to military personnel and persons attached to the military, writer Katsumoto Saotome, who wrote The Great Tokyo Air Raids and other books, said: "The difference in compensation between military personnel and civilians is totally unreasonable. Keeping silence is tantamount to condoning the discrimination."

(5) Strains in the Japan-US alliance (Part 2): US expects Japan to act voluntarily

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
March 6, 2006

Bringing together Japanese and US security experts, an informal seminar was held in San Francisco in late February in which former National Security Council Asian Affairs Director Michael Green told the following anecdote:

"America, France, and Japan wrote books on elephants. The Americans' book was about how to make money on elephants, The French wrote about the love life of elephants, but the Japanese wrote on what do elephants think of Japan?"

The ironical anecdote was directed at Tokyo, urging it to throw a ball at Washington voluntarily without being coaxed.

The first Bush administration had many Japan experts, such as Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Torkel Patterson, and Michael Green. They were all capable of throwing balls at Japan a step short of applying gaiatsu or "foreign pressure."

With such Japan experts involved in the game of throwing balls back and forth between the Japanese and the US governments, strains were minimized between the two countries when international opinion was split markedly over such key issues as the propriety of attacking Iraq. The combination could produce positive results, such as Japan's dispatch of the SDF mission to Iraq.

Japan experts are clearly in short supply in the second Bush administration. Although such members as Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns and presidential assistant Jack Crouch are drawing attention as having some Japan expertise, they are specialized more in Europe than in Asia. Japan and the US have begun disagreeing on a number of issues, such as reform of the United Nations.

TOKYO 00001217 007 OF 009

The rise of China also is having a great impact on Japan's desire to play a leadership role in Asia.

The Bush administration's strategy toward China is to form a "alliance" with such democracies as Japan, Australia, and India to make China think twice before taking any undesirable action.

The American media have become markedly critical of Japan since Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine last October. With the US government now void of Japan experts like Green, who was able to put out fires from time to time, there is no one left to explain Japan's circumstances, such as the historical issue between the Japan and China. If the image of an isolated Japan in Asia becomes fixed, there is danger that it may give rise to doubts about Japan's diplomatic influence in general.

The highest priority now for the Bush administration is its

handling the Iraq issue, which will ultimately determine the President's place in history. The Iraq issue also is likely to be the first real test for Japan-US relations under the second Bush administration, given its lack of true Japan exerts.

Ambassador to the US Ryozo Kato underscored the importance for Japan to be independently involved in Iraq's reconstruction process even after withdrawing from Samawah, saying, "Reconstruction will follow progress in the democratization process and public security. It is important for Japan to continuously play an active role."

A senior US State Department official noted: "It's not only Iraq. We don't know where mines might be buried in US-Japan relations that could go off: it could be over the realignment of US forces in Japan or over the reform of the UN Security Council."

Japan-US relations, now devoid of Japan experts, will not have a Mike Green to point things out, and Japan will have to "move on its own, having a clear awareness of what to do," as Ambassador Kato has said. Japan's positions will be avidly sought out.

(6) Whale meat stockpiles become twice as much as level of 10 years ago because of surplus supplies as a result of expanded research whaling; No longer a rare delicacy

SANKEI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
March 6, 2006

Whale meat is available in Japanese markets as the by-product of research whaling. But stockpiles have sharply increased and have doubled over the level 10 years ago. For although supplies are on the increase due to expanded research whaling, consumption of the meat has stayed flat. Whale meat used to be seen as a rare delicacy, but now it is available on store shelves on a steady basis. It is on regular dish menus at pubs. It has become a familiar item on dinner tables of ordinary people, so why doesn't it sell?

Up until 1994, Japan was allowed to catch up to 330 minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean. As supplies dwindled, prices would rise. Demand for whale meat was then so high that restaurants serving whale meat-dishes had to stockpile products obtained at high prices.

TOKYO 00001217 008 OF 009

However, the catch quota for minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean was expanded to 440 in 1995. In the North Atlantic Ocean, 150 minke whales, 50 Bryde's whales, 100 sei whales and 10 sperm whales were added to the catch quota in 2002. In 2004, another 220 minke whales and sei whales were added.

Further, the catch quota for minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean was doubled to 850 in 2005. In addition, 10 fin whales, large type of whales that weigh nearly ten times more than minke whales, were included in the quota target. For this reason, estimated whale meat supplies sharply increased to about 8,500 tons in 2005, and stockpiles surged to approximately 3,900 tons. On the other hand, consumption of the whale meat stood at approximately 7,300 tons, accounting for only 0.2% of the nation's meat consumption. The consumption of whale meat is only 1% of that of tuna.

Commenting on the sharp increase in whale-meat stockpiles -- though in absolute figures, the amount is smaller than other types of meat -- Masayuki Komatsu, the executive director of the Fisheries Research Agency, who served for 13 years until 2004 as deputy representative of the Japanese government at the International Whaling Commission (IWC), noted: "Whale meat is now readily available on store shelves. It is no longer a rare delicacy. It is, however, not a popular food. Consumers are hesitant to buy whale meat, because they are not familiar with it."

Whale meat dishes are available at pubs and Japanese-style

restaurants, due to the nostalgic boom for the good old days. Even so, whale stockpiles are continuing to increase. Komatsu explained why: "Whale meat supplies will sharply increase this year due to the new research whaling plan in the Antarctic Ocean. For that reason, restaurant operators tend to think that they need not to hastily purchase whale meat, though there is demand."

When research whaling was started, 1 kilogram of whale meat cost 3,900 yen. The price has recently dropped to 1,400 yen, which is on a par with the price of medium fatty tuna for sushi. Whale meat is still a relatively expensive food.

Chances are that if whale stockpiles continue to increase, anti-whaling countries will call for an end to research whaling. In order to avoid this situation, the Fisheries Agency has begun to search for ways to boost consumption.

Some of the marketing strategies being considered include restoring the distribution route that existed in the 1955-1966 period, reducing prices further, and targeting leading supermarket chains, which have markedly increased in number compared with that period, and targeting the restaurant industry and the take-out food market. Developing various kinds of products targeting young people, such as Chinese, Italian and French style-dishes, as well as traditional soy sauce-flavored dishes, will also future options.

Since freezers installed on research ships are outmoded, meat when processed loses the juiciness that makes it taste delicious. A number of consumers complained that they find the meat to be mixed with blood.

Komatsu concluded, "Middle-aged and older persons have experience

TOKYO 00001217 009 OF 009

in eating whale meat. It is, therefore, necessary to take care of these generations as well as to be creative with marketing that targets young people, who have never eaten whale meat before." As a specific measure, he called for whale meat to be on school meal menus.

SCHIEFFER